

WASHINGTON — House Republican leaders confronted pressure from conservatives on Thursday to take more aggressive steps to cut federal spending, with a large group of lawmakers calling for outlays to be slashed by \$2.5 trillion over the next decade, far more than the party has sought so far.

The proposal, from the Republican Study Committee, a conservative bloc that counts more than two-thirds of House Republicans as members, calls for immediate reductions of at least \$100 billion, compared with cuts in the current fiscal year of up to \$80 billion being sought by party leaders.

“We want more,” said Representative Mick Mulvaney, a freshman from South Carolina.

The \$2.5 trillion in cuts would exclude the military, and would not touch the big entitlement programs, Medicare and Social Security. As a result, its effect on the entire array of government programs, among them education, domestic security, transportation, law enforcement and medical research, would be nothing short of drastic.

Committee leaders said this was appropriate and necessary, given the government’s \$14 trillion debt and annual deficits at their highest levels since the years just after World War II.

The cuts would require the agreement of the Democratic-controlled Senate and the White House, which is highly unlikely.

The study committee proposed generally reducing agency budgets to their levels in 2006 — the last time Congressional Republicans controlled the budget process — and then freezing them, with no annual inflation adjustments. It also recommended slashing the federal workforce by 15 percent and canceling pay raises for five years, for a total of \$2.29 trillion in savings.

It did not specify how each agency would carry out the reductions.

The study committee's proposal includes an additional \$330 billion in cuts to specific programs, including Amtrak, foreign aid and even the Washington subway system.

The proposal, while not specifically endorsed by the House speaker, John A. Boehner of Ohio, or other leaders, offers the clearest picture yet of the cuts envisioned by Republicans as they seek to rein in spending, which they view as a mandate given to them by voters in November.

"I have never seen the American people more receptive, more ready for the tough-love measures that need to be taken to help fix the country," said Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio, the chairman of the study committee.

Some fiscal experts said the proposal was untenable, because it would cut much of the federal government nearly in half by 2020, including agencies like the Education Department. Some targets, like Amtrak, would potentially be put out of existence, they said.

The fight over federal spending levels is the highest priority for the new Republican majority other than repeal of the Democrats' health care overhaul.

And while party leaders said they welcomed all proposals for cuts, the pressure from the right — including Tea Party-backed members and other new lawmakers elected on a platform of fiscal restraint — threatened to complicate the battle with the Obama administration and to set unrealistic expectations among grass-roots conservatives eager to scale back government.

Even before the midterm elections, party leaders issued a "Pledge to America," promising, without providing details of which programs would be cut, to reduce nonsecurity discretionary spending to 2008 levels, a cut that Mr. Boehner had initially pegged at about \$100 billion for this fiscal year.

But with a temporary spending measure in place until early March — more than five months into the fiscal year — Republican leaders, including the Budget Committee chairman,

Representative Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin, have said that a more realistic goal would be cuts to 2008 levels prorated for the remainder of the fiscal year, or about \$60 billion to \$80 billion.

Conservative lawmakers, however, said that was not enough.

“Speaking with many of my freshmen colleagues, for us, myself included, the pledge, the \$100 billion, was simply a start; it was simply a floor,” Mr. Mulvaney, the South Carolina freshman, said at a news conference to unveil the study committee’s proposal. He added: “Anybody who is up to speed on budget issues should be scared to death by what’s happening with the debt and the deficit in this country. If you’re not losing sleep over it, then you’re simply not paying attention.”

Some Republicans warned that the country was in danger.

“The greatest threat to the security and prosperity of the United States is our debt,” said Representative John Campbell of California, a member of the study committee. “We are much closer to the Greece, Ireland, Spain precipice than I think any of us would like to believe.”

A spokesman for Mr. Boehner, Michael Steel, said that Republican leaders were focused on fulfilling the pledge first. “Our immediate goal is to cut spending to pre-bailout, pre-stimulus levels,” Mr. Steel said. “That’s what we pledged, and that’s what we’ll fight for. But that will be the beginning, not the end.”

Mr. Boehner was not alone in praising the study committee’s efforts without backing its plan.

“I applaud the Republican Study Committee,” the House majority leader, Eric Cantor of Virginia, said in a statement. “I look forward to the discussion on reducing spending that our country so desperately needs.”

Mr. Cantor said Republicans would also seek to end the system of financing presidential candidates and national party conventions with federal matching money. He said that the House would vote on the proposal next week and that it would save \$520 million over 10 years if enacted.

The formal work on spending issues is scheduled to begin on the House floor next week when Republicans take up a resolution directing Mr. Ryan, the Budget Committee chairman, to set spending parameters at 2008 levels. The vote on that resolution is scheduled for Tuesday, just hours before Mr. Obama is due on Capitol Hill to give his State of the Union address and is intended to put Republicans squarely on offense in the spending fight.

Mr. Ryan has not put forward a specific plan for cuts. He is awaiting updated data from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office on current spending. He also did not endorse the study committee's plan.

Senator Kent Conrad, Democrat of North Dakota and chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who served with Mr. Ryan on Mr. Obama's commission on lowering the national debt, said in an interview that the study committee's plan was ill-conceived and unworkable because it focused only on cuts to discretionary spending and not on overhauling the tax code or addressing entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security.

"The commission had about a trillion and a half of cuts, which I thought was at the edge of what could be done responsibly," Mr. Conrad said in an interview. "They obviously have chosen to go beyond the edge."